United Nations E/2010/NGO/67

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 May 2010

Original: English

Substantive session of 2010
New York, 28 June-22 July 2010
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Women's Environment and Development Organization, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-36362 (E) 070610

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Statement

At the Women's Environment and Development Organization, we welcome the focus of this year's annual ministerial review, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women". We recognize that it underscores the importance of building the capacity of the United Nations and Member States to fulfil their commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality in the Millennium Development Goals and other international agreements.

Advancing women's empowerment and gender equality is a prerequisite to sustainable development and to adequately addressing the urgent global climate crisis. Goal 3 explicitly addresses gender equality and women's empowerment, and the success of the remaining seven goals and, for that matter, other internationally agreed commitments, is highly dependent on the achievement of Goal 3. As recognized in the Secretary-General's report entitled "Keeping the Promise: a forward-looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015" (A/64/665), meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 is far from a reality today. Women are still the poorest of the poor and disproportionately responsible for resource management and household activities, which inhibits opportunities for education, earning a formal wage, gaining land rights and escaping the cycle of poverty. Without ensuring that a gender perspective is integrated into climate change policies and activities, gender inequalities are exacerbated.

An important and crucial step towards advancing gender equality and women's empowerment is the launch of the United Nations gender equality entity. In September 2009, the General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/63/311) supporting the consolidation of the existing four United Nations gender equality entities into a composite entity, to be headed by an Under-Secretary-General. Important fundamental elements of the new entity, as stated by the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) campaign, are strong country-level presence, ambitious funding, formal mechanisms for civil society participation, particularly women's organizations, and a strong Under-Secretary-General. These elements will ensure that the United Nations and Member States can deliver on their various commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and several others, to gender equality and women's empowerment.

For successful implementation, these commitments must be integrated into overall development goals, particularly as related to climate change and other crises that threaten sustainable development. Several sustainable development documents, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Hyogo Framework for Action, already integrate women's empowerment and gender equality into the overall goals. This annual ministerial review is an opportunity for Member States to collaborate on innovative methods to meet targets that reaffirm the importance of gender equality in international development.

We urge Governments to recognize that the launch of a new, composite gender equality entity and collaboration on a gender-responsive global climate change agreement are vital to achieving the internationally agreed development goals.